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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 172512

FOLLOWING REPEAT OSLO 3245 ACTION SECSTATE INFO COPENHAGEN, MOSCOW, REYKJAVIK, USNATO, LONDON, VAIHINGEN, USNMR SHAPE, DIA WASHDC, SECDEF WASHDC, JCS WASHDC, CNO WASHDC, AND CINCLANT NORFOLK VA DATED JULY 6, 1978.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 3245

SHAPE FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, PEPR, PINT, UR, NO
SUBJECT: UNAUTHORIZED LANDING BY SOVIET SHIPS

1. FOUR SOVIET SHIPS (ONE FREIGHTER AND THREE BULK CARRIERS AVERAGING THREE TO FOUR THOUSAND TONS) ENTERED THE SANDFJORD NEAR NORDKYN PENINSULA (71-03N, 28-05 E) ON TUESDAY EVENING, JUNE 27, WITHOUT PERMISSION. THE SHIPS HAD EARLIER ASKED FOR PERMISSION TO ENTER NORWEGIAN WATERS AND ANCHOR CLAIMING BAD WEATHER CONDITIONS. THIS REQUEST WAS DENIED, BUT THE SHIPS ARRIVED ANYWAY. NOT ONLY DID THEY DROP ANCHOR, BUT SEVERAL BOATS LANDED MEMBERS OF THE CREW BRIEFLY ON THE SHORE. THE VERACITY OF THE WEATHER EXCUSE WAS
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CHALLENGED BY LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO POINTED OUT THAT IT HAD SELDOM BEEN BETTER. THE SHIPS DEPARTED WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, AFTER BEING ORDERED TO DO SO BY THE LOCAL POLICE AUTHORITIES.
THEY WERE ESCORTED OUT OF THE FJORD BY A NORWEGIAN MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT. THE NORWEGIAN PRESS AND GOVERN-MENT AUTHORITIES TREATED THE MATTER PUBLICLY

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IN A VERY LOW KEY FASHION PREFERRING NOT TO TAKE DIRECT ISSUE WITH THE MOTIVATION FOR THE SHIPS' BEHAVIOR. SEVERAL OF THE MAJOR OSLO NEWSPAPERS, HOWEVER, ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER THE SOVIET INCURSION WAS A PROVOCATION OR A TEST OF NORWEGIAN PREPAREDNESS.

3. THE UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE, JOHAN JORGEN HOLST, COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT IN HIS VIEW THE UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY WAS A CALCULATED AND COORDINATED SOVIET MOVE. HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT AS TO WHAT THE PURPOSE COULD HAVE POSSIBLY BEEN. INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE NAVY (ADMIRAL HERLOFSON) UNDERSCORED THE MALINTENT OF THE RUSSIAN SHIPS BY POINTING OUT THAT THEY HAD HAD CONSTANT RADIO CONTACT WITH BOTH THE NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES AND WITH THEIR OWN AUTHORITIES IN MURMANSK, AND THAT THE OBVIOUS THINNESS OF THE WEATHER EXCUSE WAS CLEAR TO ALL. SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE SAID THAT IT HAD NOT YET BEEN DECIDED WHETHER A FORMAL PROTEST WOULD BE LODGED WITH THE SOVIETS, BUT THAT SUCH A MOVE WAS CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED.

4. COMMENT: FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, WE ARE EQUALLY PUZZLED BY THE POSSIBLE MOTIVATION FOR THE SOVIET ACT AND WOULD WELCOME THE DEPARTMENT'S AND EMBASSY CONFIDENTIAL

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MOSCOW'S INTERPRETATIONS.
LERNER UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

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